The Native American Sacred Circle

The sacred circle in Native American traditions represents the endless cycle of life, the wholeness of creation, and the deep connection between all living beings. Each circle is more than a physical shape; it is a spiritual sanctuary where participants honor the wisdom of ancestors and the teachings of the land. The circle has no beginning or end, symbolizing infinity, unity, and completeness.

The sacred circle among the Lenape provides balance, equality, and the deep, unbroken connection between all beings – humans, ancestors, and spirits. Its meaning is associated with the perception of "Oneness" (the circle shows that no living being is above or below another), "Shared Life" (signifies the symbiosis of nature with all living beings as linked in a web of mutual respect), and "Equality" (inside the circle everyone shares wisdom, listens in silence, and stands as an equal)

References: https://rancholapuerta.com/2024/07/02/balance-and-acceptance-in-the-sacred-circle/; https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/72988/pg72988-images.html

The Symbolism of the Four Directions

Among the Lenape (Delaware) people, the four cardinal directions are guided by four powerful spiritual beings or *manĭ'towŭk*, who were given charge of the four quarters of the earth by the Creator (*Kishelemukong*) to care for the regions and bring the winds. They represent the cycles of nature (seasons), spiritual balance, elements, and stages of life.

The East (*Wapane'wank* / *Wähänjio'pŭng*): Known as Our Grandfather in the East, this direction controls the wind and brings breath, mind, light, spring, birth, and new beginnings. It is associated with creativity, knowledge, music, and song. **Symbolism:** New beginnings, illumination, and birth; **Associations:** Associated with the rising sun, spring, and the element of air. It represents mental clarity, inspiration, and fresh opportunities. Its color is **yellow.**

The South (*Cawane'yŭng*): Often referred to as Grandmother in the South, this direction works in a seasonal balance with the North. In Lenape tradition, the spirits of the north and south are said to play a ceremonial game of bowl and dice during the winter to determine the shifting length and severity of the cold. **Symbolism:** Growth, passion, and vitality; **Associations:** Linked to the midday sun, summer, and the element of fire. It stands for energy, courage, and creativity. Its color is **white.**

The West (*Eliosi'gak*): Known as Grandfather at the West, this direction forms part of the sacred cyclical and architectural orientation—such as the traditional Big House ceremony, where the east-west axis mirrors the path of the sun, the moon, and human life from birth to death. **Symbolism:** Introspection, transition, and the setting sun; **Associations:** Connected to sunset, autumn, and the element of water. It represents deep emotions, self-reflection, and the later stages or closing chapters of life. Its color is **black**.

The North (*Lowane'wank* / *Lowane'yŭng*): Known as Our Grandfather in the North, this direction controls the power of rock, giving physical form and solidity to the Creator's thoughts. He provides winter, ice, snow, cold, trees, rocks, and our physical bodies. **Symbolism:** Wisdom, grounding, and endurance; **Associations:** Tied to winter, night, and the element of earth. It represents a place of rest, recovery, patience, and unyielding strength in facing life's hardships. Its color is **red**.

References: https://www.stjo.org/native-american-culture/native-american-beliefs/four-directions/; https://collections.lowermerionhistory.org/home/full-text/contents/lenape/; https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/72988/pg72988-images.html

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